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U.S. Antiterrorist Policy Called Casualty of Sales

Sen. Leahy Says Effect Will Outlast Reagan

By George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The biggest single casualty in the Iran affair is U.S. antiterrorist policy, which will take more years to rebuild than President Reagan has left in office, Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said yesterday.

Leahy said in a telephone interview that Reagan's successor in the White House will still be struggling to persuade the world that the United States is opposed to selling arms to states that sponsor terrorism.

The Reagan administration has admitted that it secretly sold U.S. arms to Iran while publicly urging other nations not to do so—opening

a huge credibility gap, in Leahy's view. "There has been terrible damage to antiterrorist policy," he said.

In making his political rounds in Vermont since the Senate adjourned, Leahy said he has encountered "a lot of disillusionment" about the government for preaching one thing and doing the opposite. He predicted that the perception that "the administration did something completely against the law" will remain in the public mind for years rather than fade away as Reagan has forecast.

Asked if the locked files of the Senate intelligence committee contain any blockbuster disclosures, Leahy said, "No, not really. If there are any blockbusters at all, I would

guess it would be how and to whom the money" from the sales of U.S. arms to Iran "was diverted," which the committee has yet to establish.

He repeated his earlier statement that Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, who was on the National Security Council staff, could not have acted alone. "He certainly would have had to have had logistical support" to get the arms delivered, Leahy said.

One reason that the administration derailed itself by selling arms to Iran was its failure to consult Congress before rushing down the track. "Even after six years this administration doesn't understand the oversight process" provided by the Senate and House intelligence committees, Leahy said.

"The truth is that members of Congress want the president to succeed," said Leahy. "They don't want him making bad, bad decisions. I've supported a lot of covert decisions in my time on the committee. Most of them have been supported unanimously, knowing that some of them may go belly up."

If one of those failed operations becomes public, Leahy said, the president can say it had the support of Congress and, thus, avoid the type of political polarization and mistrust he now faces. CIA Director William J. Casey never saw it that way, Leahy said.

"I think that has been Bill's one big problem," Leahy continued. "He just couldn't accept the oversight function of Congress. I understand his problem with it. But it can be done in a way to build trust."

If the congressional intelligence committees had been consulted on the idea of trading U.S. arms for hostages, Leahy said, the lawmakers would have talked the White House out of it and saved Reagan and the country an immense amount of grief.

Leahy said he has told Frank C. Carlson, who will become White House national security adviser next month, that the NSC under Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter had gone beyond its proper role by trying to be "a mini-CIA, a mini-State Department" rather than an analytical and coordinating group.

"I think he agreed with me," said Leahy of Carlucci.